

C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 001106

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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR CHALLENGES SOCIALISTS ON EU
CONSTITUTION CAMPAIGN'S NEGATIVE MESSAGE ON U.S.-EU
RELATIONS

REF: PARIS 1014

Classified By: Ambassador Howard H. Leach for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: Ambassador Leach and DCM Wolff February 21 expressed concern to the Socialist Party (PS) leadership about the negative message on U.S.-EU relations contained in the party's campaign material in support of a yes vote on the EU constitution in France's late spring referendum. In conversation with PS First Secretary Francois Hollande, former Prime Minister Lionel Jospin, former Finance Minister and PS Executive Committee Member Dominique Strauss-Kahn, and former Foreign Minister Hubert Vedrine, the Ambassador and DCM pointed out that encouraging voters to support the constitution because it will permit the EU to "stand up to the U.S." (reftel) distorted the nature of the U.S.-EU relationship and risked undermining the work we have done in the past months to put our differences behind us and focus on our shared objectives in the world. In response, Hollande insisted that the Socialist message was not a negative one, that the PS regarded the U.S. as a friend and ally, and would do nothing to damage the relationship. Hollande agreed to "take another look" at the wording of the PS campaign material, but did not commit to changing it. He also undertook to make clear in addressing the public that the EU was not being built in opposition to the U.S. End summary.

¶2. (C) On learning of the negative message about U.S.-European relations contained in the PS's pro-constitution campaign material (reftel), Ambassador and DCM initiated a series of phonecalls to the PS leadership to point out the harm such a campaign could do to our efforts to strengthen transatlantic relations -- at the very moment when President Bush had begun his European visit, with its very positive message. The Ambassador told Jospin, Strauss-Kahn and Vedrine that he anticipated very negative press play, should the U.S. media pick up on the story. This, in turn, could undo all of the work we have done together over the past months to strengthen the relationship. All agreed that the campaign message posed a problem, and undertook to talk with PS First Secretary Francois Hollande about it. They warned, however, that their ability to effect a change in the campaign material was limited. The Ambassador also spoke with French Ambassador to the U.S. Jean-David Levitte, who agreed that the PS campaign could undermine our efforts to put differences behind us.

¶3. (C) Hollande, after some delay due to his visit to Spain over the weekend, contacted DCM on February 21. The DCM reviewed the reasons for our objecting to the campaign message and pressed Hollande to revise the text of the PS poster and manifesto, which read, in part, "Yes to a strong Europe facing up to the USA" (Oui a une Europe forte face aux USA). "While the reelection of Bush confirms the will of the U.S. to decide the fate of the world alone, the Europeans cannot afford the luxury of a crisis whose outcome would be uncertain. To say no (to the constitution) today would be to paralyze the European construction for the long-term." The DCM made clear that we viewed this language as targeting the U.S. and distorting the nature of the transatlantic relationship.

¶4. (C) Hollande, polite and defensive, said that a native French speaker would have a different interpretation of the slogan. Rather than describing an adversarial or confrontational relationship, the phrase "facing up to the USA" implied a Europe working alongside the U.S. and able to stand on its own feet. Hollande said that he wanted the U.S. to know that the PS regarded it as a friend and ally and would do nothing to undermine the relationship. At the same time, said Hollande, being allies did not mean that we would always agree on every issue. The DCM responded that he could find no better way to characterize the relationship himself. Nevertheless, he continued, if it was the PS's intention to cast the relationship in those positive terms, the choice of language in the slogan was not logical. There were far more direct and unambiguous ways in French to say that we had a friendly and allied relationship.

¶5. (C) The DCM pressed Hollande again to revise the poster and manifesto language and urged Hollande and other PS leaders to make clear in their public statements that they did not see Europe being built in opposition to the U.S. Hollande agreed to "take another look" at the wording of the

PS campaign material, but did not commit to changing it. He also undertook to make clear in addressing the public that the EU was not being built in opposition to the U.S.
Leach